

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 11

January 10, 1995, 6:16 p.m.
Page S-725 Temp. Record

CONGRESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT/Children's Food and Shelter

SUBJECT: Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 . . . S. 2. Dole motion to table the Wellstone amendment No. 14.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 56-43

SYNOPSIS: Pertinent votes on this legislation include Nos. 2-10 and 13-14.

As introduced, S. 2, the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995, will extend 11 civil rights and labor laws to the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the instrumentalities of Congress.

The Wellstone amendment would express the sense of Congress that "Congress should not enact or adopt any legislation that will increase the number of children who are hungry or homeless" and would require the report accompanying each bill or joint resolution of a public character reported by a congressional committee to contain a detailed analysis of the probable impact of the bill or resolution on children, including on hungry and/or homeless children.

During debate, Senator Dole moved to table the Wellstone amendment. The motion to table is not debatable; however, some debate preceded the making of the motion. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

Our Democratic colleagues are sincere and passionate in proposing this amendment. As usual, their hearts are in the right place. Unfortunately, their heads are nowhere to be found--our colleagues are guilty of faulty reasoning. Given the tenor of some of the comments we have heard, this conclusion is the most charitable that we can ascribe.

The text of the Wellstone amendment is seemingly innocuous--it states that Congress should not pass bills that starve children or put them out on the streets, and it requires the reports accompanying proposed bills to contain analyses of the probable impact of those bills on children, including hungry and homeless children. In our many years in Congress, we have yet to hear any Member speak approvingly of starving children or throwing them in the streets. No Member ever designs legislation with the intent of harming

(See other side)

YEAS (56)			NAYS (43)		NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (53 or 100%)	Democrats (3 or 7%)		Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (43 or 93%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hutchison	Hollings		Akaka		Rockefeller- ²
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Kerrey		Baucus		
Bennett	Jeffords	Lieberman		Biden		
Bond	Kassebaum			Bingaman		
Brown	Kempthorne			Boxer		
Burns	Kyl			Bradley		
Chafee	Lott			Breaux		
Coats	Lugar			Bryan		
Cochran	Mack			Bumpers		
Cohen	McCain			Byrd		
Coverdell	McConnell			Campbell		
Craig	Murkowski			Conrad		
D'Amato	Nickles			Daschle		
DeWine	Packwood			Dodd		
Dole	Pressler			Dorgan		
Domenici	Roth			Exon		
Faircloth	Santorum			Feingold		
Frist	Shelby			Feinstein		
Gorton	Simpson			Ford		
Gramm	Smith			Glenn		
Grams	Snowe			Graham		
Grassley	Specter					
Gregg	Stevens					
Hatch	Thomas					
Hatfield	Thompson					
Helms	Thurmond					
	Warner					

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

children, nor does any ever design legislation in which they accept such harm as an acceptable by-product. If the Wellstone amendment were to pass, it would have absolutely zero effect on any legislation--congressional committees would report exactly the same bills that they would have reported absent the requirement, and they would attach their findings on how they expected children to benefit, or, alternatively, how they expected no effect on children. No report would ever predict harm.

Many Senators, particularly more liberal Democrats, would be quite disgruntled with how the Wellstone amendment would work in practice. Republicans would report bills explaining why workfare requirements, learnfare requirements, block grant cash-out programs, and other conservative approaches to welfare programs that affect children would prove beneficial to those children. Similarly, Democrats may find themselves reading bills against rent control based on studies that show that a large percentage of homelessness is caused by rent control laws. Needless to say, those Democratic Senators would not believe those reports--they would think that they could not possibly be correct, because they would be in conflict with their liberal ideology.

Ideologies often have great power, refusing to yield to either logic or experience. In the Senate, some ideologues have yet to accept the conclusions of the SIME/DIME welfare study or the subsequent three decades of social science research which proves that increasing welfare benefits increases welfare dependency. Have our colleagues learned anything from the past 30 years? Has the increased rate of welfare dependency, with all its attendant social pathologies, caused them to rethink the advisability of the welfare state? Based on some of the comments we have heard, we have to conclude they have not. Senators have quite clearly indicated that they have offered this amendment because they have decided that the House Republicans' "Contract with America" outlining their policies for the 104th Congress is a "Contract on America" that "is very harsh," and "very mean spirited" because of its welfare reform proposals.

Most Republicans do not agree with Democrats on how to reform welfare. Republicans believe Democratic policies are incredibly and tragically destructive. They believe those policies have been largely responsible for causing the high levels of poverty, the breakdown of the family, the increased crime rate, the increased drug abuse rate, the higher infant mortality rate, and many of the other social ills that plague our country. However, Republicans do not accuse Democrats of "mean spiritedness" for supporting those policies; they understand both sides mean well, but simply disagree. In our opinion, some Democrats have a tendency to assume that any opposition to their views must come from base motivations, because they do not understand how anyone could disagree with views that they hold so sincerely. Those individuals who sometimes find themselves in disagreement with Democrats may find this tendency to be a bit smug.

Though we realize that enactment of this amendment would have no practical effect, we will vote to table it. Our priority is to pass this bill cleanly, without any extraneous subjects attached that will complicate and slow down negotiations with the House on resolving differences between the two bodies' bills. Attaching an amendment that Senators argued during debate was necessary to temper the "mean spirited" policies of the majority party in the House would probably cause some degree of delay in passage. We cannot support any delay. Americans are distrustful of and angry with Congress. Congress needs to pass this bill swiftly to begin the process of restoring America's faith in it. We therefore ask our colleagues to join us in tabling the Wellstone amendment.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

The Senate will soon be considering a bill that will require each committee to consider the impact, if any, that its proposed legislation will have on State governments, local governments, and businesses. If this action is appropriate, then it is surely more appropriate to require committees to consider the impact, if any, that their proposed legislation will have on children. Seventeen years ago, Hubert Humphrey said the test of a Government and the test of a society is the way it treats people in the dawn of life--children--the way it treats people in the twilight of their life--the elderly--and the way it treats people in the shadow of life--the disabled and the needy.

Our great fear is that the United States is about to fail that test. A great selfishness, and perhaps even vindictiveness, has infected American politics. In the recent election, Americans, disgusted with the continuing abuses of power by Members of Congress, voted to throw the rascals out. Because there were more Democrats than Republicans in both Houses, Democrats suffered disproportionately from this voter anger with incumbents. The result was a Republican landslide that resulted in Republican control of both Houses of Congress.

Many Republicans believe this election gave them a mandate to slash social programs as they promised to do in the mean-spirited House Republican campaign document, "Contract with America." Republicans have already said they will not touch military spending, and they will not touch Social Security. With most of Federal spending already thus sequestered, with Republicans proclivity to provide tax breaks to rich people and corporations, and with Republicans' promise to slash welfare spending, we are fearful of the harm that may soon befall children in America. Senators should not lose sight of the fact that most social welfare programs are geared to helping children. They should not lose sight of the fact that hunger and homelessness among children has been steadily rising for 25 years, as has violence, drug abuse, and suicide. If the Federal Government stops helping children when their need is greater than ever, the result is that those children will suffer.

When we pass legislation that is going to harm children, we should admit what we are doing. We will soon be doing as much for corporations and State and local governments. If our colleagues believe our children deserve equal consideration, they will join us

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in voting against the motion to table the Wellstone amendment.